WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A gauge system comprising:

an electronic instrument including at least one programmable feature and at least one access module restricting access to the at least one programmable feature; and

an instrument-pass operable with the access module, wherein the access module is responsive to the instrument-pass to allow and to restrict access to the at least one programmable feature.

2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the access module and the instrument-pass comprises a radio frequency identification device system.

3. The system of Claim 1, wherein the access module comprises a radio frequency transponder.

4. The system of Claim 1, wherein the access module comprises an infrared detector and the instrument-pass is an infrared transmitter.

5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the access module comprises a reader selected from the group consisting of a bar code reader and a magnetic strip reader.

6. The system of Claim 1, wherein the access module includes a physical device connection, and wherein the instrument-pass includes an encapsulated electronic component to activate the access module.

7. The system of Claim 6, wherein the encapsulated electronic component is a resistor.

8. The system of Claim 1, further comprising:

a first transceiver coupled to the electronic gauge;

a workstation; and

a second transceiver coupled to the workstation, wherein the first transceiver is operable to transmit to the second transceiver the access to the at least one programmable feature.

9. The system of Claim 8, wherein the first and second transceivers communicate using digital communication technology.

10. The system of Claim 9, wherein the digital communication technology is packet-based communication.

11. The system of Claim 10, wherein the digital communication technology is asynchronous transfer mode.

12. The system of Claim 8, wherein the first and second transceivers communicate using analog communication technology.

13. The system of Claim 8, wherein the first and second transceivers communicate using radio frequency transponders.

14. The system of Claim 8, wherein the first and second transceivers communicate via a wireline link.

15. The system of Claim 8, wherein the first and second transceivers communicate via an optical link.

16. The system of Claim 8, wherein the workstation is operable to receive information from the electronic gauge via the first and second transceivers.

17. The system of Claim 8, wherein the workstation is operable to transmit information to the electronic gauge via the first and second transceivers.

18. The system of Claim 8, further comprising a network, wherein the workstation is coupled to the network, the workstation operable to transmit and receive information via the network.

19. The system of Claim 18, wherein the network comprises a local area network.

20. The system of Claim 18, wherein the network comprises a wide area network.

21. The system of Claim 18, wherein the network comprises a portion of the Internet.

22. The system of Claim 18, wherein the network comprises an optical network.

23. The system of Claim 18, further comprising a server, wherein the server is operable to transmit and receive information from the workstation.

24. The system of Claim 8, further comprising a workstation access module operable with the instrument-pass key, wherein the workstation access module provides access to the programmable features of the electronic gauge.

25. A method of providing security for a gauge comprising:

detecting the presence of an instrument-pass; and

if the instrument-pass satisfies predetermined access criteria, allowing access to at least one programmable feature of the gauge.

26. The method of Claim 25, further comprising the step of entering a code to allow access to the at least one programmable feature of the gauge.

27. The method of Claim 26, wherein the step of entering the code is performed before the instrument-pass can be detected.

28. The method of Claim 26, wherein the step of detecting the instrument-pass is performed before the step of entering the code.

29. The method of Claim 25, wherein the instrument-pass is detected at the gauge.

30. The method of Claim 25, further comprising transmitting the presence of the instrument-pass to a remote transceiver.

31. The method of Claim 30, further comprising detecting the transmitted presence of the instrument-pass by a workstation coupled to the remote transceiver.

32. The method of Claim 31, further comprising allowing access to the at least one programmable feature of the gauge from the workstation.

33. The method of Claim 25, wherein the instrument-pass is detected at a workstation remote from the gauge.

34. The method of Claim 33, wherein detecting the instrument-pass allows access to the at least one programmable feature of the gauge from the workstation.

35. A method of providing security for a gauge comprising:

reading information from an instrument-pass;

determining if the read information satisfies predetermined access criteria; and

selectively allowing and denying access to at least one programmable feature of the gauge based on the determination of whether the read information satisfies predetermined access criteria.

36. The method of Claim 35, further comprising:

determining if the read information requires additional input;

prompting for the additional input; and

reading the additional input, wherein reading the additional input selectively allows and denies access to the at least one programmable feature of the gauge based on the determination that the additional input satisfies predetermined access criteria.

37. The method of Claim 36, wherein the additional input is a personal identification number.

38. The method of Claim 35, wherein reading information from an instrument-pass comprises accessing programmed material stored in the instrument-pass, the programmed material corresponding to a predetermined access level.

39. The method of Claim 38, wherein the determination of whether the read information satisfies the predetermined access criteria comprises comparing the access level of the programmed material with the predetermined access criteria.

40. A gauge system comprising:

an electronic diagnostic gauge including access module for restricting access to the electronic gauge;

a first instrument-pass, wherein the access module is responsive to the first instrument-pass to allow a first level of access to the electronic gauge; and

a second instrument-pass, wherein the access module is responsive to the second instrument-pass to allow a second level of access to the electronic gauge.

41. A gauge system comprising:

an instrument-pass including access information; and

an electronic instrument including an access module responsive to the instrument-pass to allow or deny access to at least one programmable feature of the gauge based on the access information.

42. The system of Claim 41, wherein the access information comprises a predetermined radio frequency.

43. The system of Claim 41, wherein the access module comprises a reader.

44. The system of Claim 41, wherein the access module comprises a detector.

45. A gauge management system comprising:

an instrument-pass;

an entry module operable to control access to an instrument;

an input/output device; and

a function module operable to manipulate programmable features of the instrument, wherein the entry module allows access to the gauge upon receiving a predefined access criteria from the instrument-pass, and wherein the function module manipulates the programmable features of the instrument based on input from the input/output device.

46. The system of Claim 45, further comprising a storage module operable to store access information in a database.

47. The system of Claim 46, wherein the storage module is further operable to retrieve information from the database.

48. The system of Claim 45, wherein the entry module and function module are programmed into the gauge.

49. The system of Claim 45, further comprising a workstation, wherein the entry module and function module are programmed into the workstation, the workstation coupled to the gauge and adaptable to receive the predefined access criteria from the instrument-pass.

50. The system of Claim 49, further comprising:

a first transceiver coupled to the gauge; and

a second transceiver coupled to the workstation, wherein the first and second transceivers are operable to communicate the access criteria and the input of the input/output device between the gauge and the workstation.